

Message Text

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AMCONSUL ADANA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMCONSUL KHORRAMSHAHR

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L TABRIZ 0007

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, IR, IZ

SUBJ: KURDISH WAR IN IRAQ: IRANIAN INPUTS

REF: TABRIZ A-10 OF APRIL 27, 1974

SUMMARY: IRAQI GOVERNMENT POLICY OF SUBDUING MULLA MUSTAFA BARZANI'S KURDS THROUGH ECONOMIC BLOCKADE AND AIR STRIKES APPEARS TO BE FAILING COMPLETELY, INSOFAR AS FIRST HAND OBSERVATIONS AND INFORMATION FROM IRANIAN SIDE CAN DETERMINE. KURDISH NON-COMBATANTS ARE MOVING INTO IRAN. IRANIAN SUPPLIES AND SOME WEAPONS ARE MOVING INTO IRAQI KURDISTAN. THESE ARE THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM VICE COUNSUL JUNE 4-6 TRIP TO THE IRANO-IRAQI BORDER. END SUMMARY.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS: IRAQ HAS DECLARED AN ECONOMIC BLOCKADE OF KURDISH AREAS. NO ONE SHOULD BE UNDER ILLUSION THAT IRANIAN BORDER IS A SEIVE; IT IS A FAUCET. HOTELS IN REZAIYEH, MAHABAD, AND SARDASHT, ALL IN PROVINCE OF WEST AZERBAIJAN, ARE WELL FILLED WITH BARZANI KURDS. HOTEL KEEPERS, BAZAAR
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MERCHANTS, AND OTHERS UNIFORMLY SAY THAT IRAQI KURDS ARE WELL

SUPPLIED WITH MONEY AND ARE SPENDING FREELY. FABULOUS RUMORS ARE SPREAD OF INDIVIDUAL KURDS DROPPING 100,000 OR 150,000 RIALS AT A CRACK. WHILE PROBABLY EXAGGERATED, THIS DOES GIVE FEEL FOR VOLUME OF SPENDING GOING ON IN BORDER AREA. THOSE DOING SPENDING ARE GENERALLY YOUNG MEN, WITHOUT WOMEN, WHO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES FREELY AS IRAQI KURDS BUT WEAR NON-DISTINCTIVE CLOTHING AND TURN UP FOR THREE, FOUR DAYS BEFORE RETURNING TO WAR. THEIR VEHICLES, EITHER WITHOUT LICENSE PLATES OR WITH IRAQI ONES, CAN BE SEEN AS FAR EAST AS REZAIKEH.

EXTENT OF IRANIAN COOPERATION QUITE CLEAR AT SARDASHT. STOCKS IN GAS STATION NOW NUMBER MORE THAN 6,000 55 GALLON DRUMS OF GASOLINE. APPROXIMATELY 50 VEHICLES OF IRAQI ORIGIN WERE SEEN IN TOWN, MOSTLY LANDROVERS BUT WITH SPRINKLING OF RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN JEEPS AND SOME SMALL TRUCKS OF THREE QUARTER TON SIZE. ONE RUMOR, UNSUBSTANTIATED, FROM TRUCK DRIVER WHO REGULARLY DRIVES SHORT STRETCH BETWEEN SARDASHT AND BORDER, HAS IT THAT IRAN HAS RECENTLY GIVEN 25 RUSSIAN JEEPS TO KURDS AND THAT TRUCKS CAPTURED IN IRAQ EXCEED KURDISH NEEDS. SINCE RUMORS ARE FLYING FAST AND THICK THESE DAYS, THIS SHOULD BE ACCEPTED WITH CAUTION.

DETAILS FROM GENERAL OTMISHI: MORE DETAILS ON FIGHTING AND IRANIAN SUPPORT WERE PROVIDED BY GENERAL OTMISHI, GOVERNOR OF SARDASHT (PROTECT; SEE REPAIR FOR BIOGRAPHIC DETAILS ON GENERAL OTMISHI). ACCORDING TO HIM, IRAQI DECISION TO BOMB ALL POSSIBLE TARGETS IN KURDISH AREAS WAS CONSIDERABLE MISTAKE. SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS AND PRIVATE HOMES WERE ALL STRUCK. FIELDS HAVE BEEN HIT WITH NAPALM. MAJORITY OF FAMILIES HAVE LOST RELATIVES OR FRIENDS. THE RESULT HAS BEEN TO DRIVE EDUCATED AND URBAN KURDS INTO UNITY WITH BARZANI, WHOSE PRESTIGE IS NOW ENORMOUS THROUGHOUT KURDISTAN. TO SAFEGUARD FAMILIES, INCREASING NUMBERS OF NON-COMBATANTS ARE MOVING INTO IRAN. SINCE LAST VISIT FROM THIS CONSULATE, JUST OVER MONTH AGO, REFUGEE CAMP OF OVER THOUSAND PERSONS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AT SARDASHT. GENERAL OTMISHI STATED THAT TWO LARGER CAMPS, EACH OF 7-8,000 PERSONS HAVE BEEN SET UP NEAR KHANEH AND REZAIYEH. IRANIAN GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING AMPLE FOOD AND SOME CLOTHING TO THESE PEOPLE. CAMP AT SARDASHT, WHICH REPORTING OFFICER SAW, HAD OVER ONE HUNDRED FAMILY SIZE TENTS, WAS LAID OUT IN NEAT MILITARY

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FASHION, AND APPEARED CLEAN. A RED LION AND SUN (IRANIAN RED CROSS) TENT HAD BEEN SET UP NEXT TO IT TO FUNCTION AS A CLINIC. BAZAAR RUMOR IN SARDASHT PLACED NUMBER OF REFUGEE CIVILIANS IN IRAN AT 18,000; CLOSE ENOUGH TO GENERAL OTMISHI'S FIGURES TO ACT AS PARTIAL CONFIRMATION.

AGAIN ACCORDING GENERAL OTMISHI, FIGHTING HAS SLOWED IN RECENT WEEKS. IRAQI GARRISONS HOLD ALL MAJOR TOWNS BUT DO NOT EXTEND

OUTSIDE TOWNS. BARZANI FORCES STILL HOLD MOUNTAIN TOPS AND RIDGE LINES WITHIN ONE OR TWO KILOMETERS OF TOWNS SUCH AS SULAI-MANIYA. IRAQIS, ACCORDING TO GOVERNOR, DO NO NIGHT PATROLLING OUTSIDE THEIR LINES. THE ROADS ARE OPEN IN TERMS OF LARGE CONVOY MOVEMENT BUT CAN CERTAINLY NOT BE CONSIDERED SAFE.

MOST KURDISH CASUALTIES TO DATE HAVE BEEN FROM AIR STRIKES. GOVERNOR OTMISHI STATED FLATLY THAT KURDS HAVE RECEIVED NEW ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS WITHIN LAST THREE WEEKS. HE CLAIMED NOT TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TYPE OR IN WHAT QUANTITY BUT CLEARLY INDICATED THAT THEY HAD BEEN PROVIDED BY IRANIANS. THIS PARTIALLY SUPPORTED BY REPORT CONSULATE RECEIVED FROM AN AMERICAN PAGE COMPANY EMPLOYEE, WHO SPOKE OF SEEING COLUMN OF TOWED ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS MOVING TOWARD BORDER IN VICINITY KHANEH ABOUT THREE WEEKS AGO. GENERAL OTMISHI CLAIMED NEW ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS HAD RESULTED IN IRAQIS GOING OVER TO HIGH ALTITUDE BOMBING WITH NATURAL LOSS OF ACCURACY. HE NOTED THAT CASUALTIES IN SARDASHT WERE REDUCED FROM TIME OF LAST CONSULAR VISIT AND THAT HOSPITAL AT SARDASHT WAS NO LONGER FULL. HE DID NOTE THAT SERIOUS WOUNDED ARE EVACUATED BY ROAD TO MEHABAD AND REZIAYEH. NO HELICOPTERS ARE BEING USED FOR THIS PURPOSE. SOME CASES ARE FLOWN FROM REXIAYEH TO TEHRAN. TWO EXCELLENT SOURCES IN TABRIZ HAVE CONFIRMED THAT RED LION AND SUN DOCTORS ARE RECEIVING EXTRA PAY FOR WORKING ONE OR TWO MONTH STINTS AT HOSPITALS ALONG BORDER.

CONTINUING TO TALK ABOUT EQUIPMENT, GENERAL OTMISHI STATED THAT KURDS HAVE SOME HEAVY MORTARS (81 AND 120MM) AND THAT AMMUNITION WAS NOT PROBLEM. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH A CONSULATE LOCAL, TRUCK DRIVER MENTIONED EARLIER, STATED THAT AMMUNITION IS DRIVEN REGULARLY TO BORDER BY IRANIAN ARMY TRUCKS WITH ARMY DRIVERS OF KURDISH ORIGIN WEARING CIVILIAN CLOTHES. SUCH TRUCKS HAVE BEEN SEEN BY US, ALTHOUGH WE COULD NOT IDENTIFY

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CONTENTS. TRANSPORTATION ACROSS BORDER APPARENTLY ACCOMPLISHED BY KURDS THEMSELVES. SAME DRIVER ALSO CLAIMED THAT 60-65 IRAQI ARMY POW'S ARE BEING HELD JUST ON IRANIAN SIDE OF BORDER NEAR SARDASHT.

GENERAL OTMISHI CONCLUDED THAT BARZANI DETERMINED CONTINUE WAR UNTIL HE RECEIVES AUTONOMY HE HAS DEMANDED AND MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER KIRKUK OIL FIELDS. IN OTMISHI'S OPINION, BARZANI HAS UNITY, STRENGTH, AND ABILITY TO CONTINUE STRUGGLE FOR LONG TIME. IRAQIS, ON THE OTHER HAND, LACK THIS UNITY OF PURPOSE OR SINGLE LEASER OF BARZANI'S STATURE. IN LONG RUN, THIS COULD BRING ABOUT COLLAPSE OF BAGHDAD GOVERNMENT.

CONCLUSION: JUDGING NOT ONLY BY WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, BUT BY WHAT WE HAVE SEEN IRANIAN SUPPORT TO THE BARZANI KURDS HAS

BEEN INCREASED IN THE LAST MONTH. MORE SUPPLIES ARE IN EVIDENCE AT THE BORDER. MORE IRAQI KURDISH VEHICLES ARE PRESENT TO CARRY THEM TO THE FIGHTING. NEW REFUGEE CAMPS HAVE BEEN SET UP AND APPEAR TO BE FUNCTIONING SMOOTHLY, MORE IRAQI KURDS WITH MORE MONEY TO SPEND ARE CIRCULATING IN IRANIAN TOWNS. IF TRUE, THE DELIVERY OF NEW ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS MARKS A FURTHER STEP IN INCREASED IRANIAN SUPPLIES. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE THE KIND OF MASSIVE ARMAMENT SUPPLY THAT WOULD REALLY CHANGE THE OLD BALANCE OF FORCES BETWEEN BARZANI AND THE IRAQI ARMY. THUS FAR, OUR OBSERVATIONS LEAD US TO THINK THAT IRAN IS CONTINUING TO GIVE BARZANI ENOUGH TO KEEP HIM FROM LOSING, ECONOMICALLY OR MILITARILY, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO ALLOW HIM TO WIN ON HIS OWN.

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